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STATE FOR INR/I, WHA/CAR KJMCISAAC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2016

TAGS: [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [CIVS](#) [KFRD](#) [BF](#)

SUBJECT: C-NC6-00829: BAHAMAS IMMIGRATION SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT

REF: STATE 114021

Classified By: Acting Political Chief Hugh Simon for Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1.(S/NF) SUMMARY: The Bahamas comprises more than 700 islands and cays in an area roughly the size of California, policed by only 2500 law enforcement personnel backed by 1200 defense force members. While cooperative with US officials, the Bahamian Immigration Service is poorly funded and equipped. The major tourist ports of entry (POES) employ a networked online database for air arrivals, but sea arrivals and departures are only lightly scrutinized. CBP pre-clearance facilities in Nassau and Freeport add a significant layer of screening for air travel to the US. END SUMMARY.

2. Below are detailed responses keyed to questions in reftel:

A. National Immigration Database

1) (S/NF) The Bahamian Immigration Service has its own online database. Visitor data is entered upon arrival in the Department of Immigration's system via passport swipe and entry of data from immigration cards. The cards are subsequently transferred to the Ministry of Tourism, which is responsible for tracking visitor departures. A complete tracking of visitor entry/departure information requires a hand search of card files held by the Tourism Ministry as well as Immigration. The Immigration database is available at most international airport POES located on the larger islands in the Bahamas, but not at seaport POES.

2) Problems:

- (S/NF) The Police, Immigration Service and Tourism personnel have limited formal exchanges of information; personal relationships allow operational information exchange. There is no electronic interconnectivity. For example, if the Special Branch of the Police, which tracks terrorism, becomes involved in locating an individual, Special Branch personnel must physically search the card files of the Immigration and Tourism ministries.

- (S/NF) The Immigration Service and political officials connected with immigration have been involved in the past in immigrant smuggling to the US. The Immigration Service Chief attempts to work effectively with a positive attitude.

- (C) Immigration Service personnel receive limited training.

The US has provided some airport security training to Immigration personnel.

- (C) A limited and static Immigration Service budget is a continuing constraint on operations and improvement.

- (S/NF) With only limited screening of visitors at the smaller Bahamian ports and total lack of electronic connectivity, controls are not effective. Once a sea-borne visitor has checked into a Bahamian port on most islands, departure and reentry are not monitored.

(S/NF) Database Updating: The Immigration Service's database is updated with each new card entry on a daily basis. The Tourism ministry's card file is 2-3 months behind on filing.

#### B. Watchlist and Information Sharing

1) (S/NF) No electronic watchlist is used for screening visitors at POES. Physical lists are available in the Immigration Service's offices at each staffed POE, for Immigration officials to peruse, but they are not available at the stations visitors must pass while entering The Bahamas. Screening depends upon an individual officer's memory.

- (S/NF) The Special Police, who are US officials' primary contact for terrorism watchlists do not routinely review the Immigration database for suspects.

#### 2) Domestic information:

- (S/NF) There is no domestic watchlist.
- (S/NF) The Police are the central custodian of domestic criminal/terrorist information. They operate, however, with limited information exchange from other agencies. For example, the Foreign Ministry, to whom the US supplies deportee lists, does not share this information with the Police. (US officials provide copies to the Police.)

#### 3) International lists:

- (C) The Interpol watchlist is handled by the Criminal Detection Unit of the Bahamian Police Force.

- (S/NF) Domestic Bahamian airlines use US No-fly and other lists via the DHS/CBP pre clearance facilities at Nassau and Freeport airports. If a "hit" is received, the airline waits for clearance from the US before clearing. Bahamian authorities are in touch with the Embassy when this occurs.

4) (S/NF) Networking: There is networking among Immigration posts via Internet at major POES.

5) (S/NF) Networking among agencies: There is no electronic networking among agencies' systems. Each has its own system.

#### 6) Access:

- (S/NF) For Immigration systems, all officers have access.

- (S/NF) For Police, the Special Branch officers have access via Intranet, using security provisions for access levels.

#### 7) Notification Procedures:

- (S/NF) If the CBP at the pre-clearance facilities encounters a watchlisted individual, US procedures are followed.

- (S/NF) If Bahamian agencies identify a watchlisted person, the Police Special Branch is notified, who also contacts the US Embassy. The Bahamian authorities hold the person while the Embassy contacts the appropriate US agencies.

8) (S/NF) There are no bi-lateral agreements on these subjects between The Bahamas and neighboring countries.

9) (S/NF) Automated checks: Nassau and Freeport airports conduct automated checks on passenger lists for air arrivals. There is no system for sea arrivals. Sea arrivals are issued cards by the passenger line, which serve as identification for departure.

10) (S/NF) Entry information is collected by the Immigration Service from arrivals; the Tourism ministry gathers data from departing visitors.

#### 11C. Biometrics

1) (S/NF) There are no biometric systems in place at ports of entry or known plans to install such a system other than development of an e-passport discussed in C-5 below.

2) (S/NF) Biometric technologies: There are no biometric technologies in use.

3) (S/NF) Monitoring biometric technologies: There is no monitoring in place.

4) (S/NF) Populations: There is no monitoring of any population.

5) (S/NF) Machine readable passport: Currently, The Bahamas does not use a machine-readable passport, but one is currently under development.

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